



The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 20 July 1968



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THE PRESIDENT'S
DAILY BRIEF
20 JULY 1968

1. Soviet Union -
Czechoslovakia

Dubcek impressively consolidated his internal position yesterday when the Central Committee unanimously endorsed the presidium's unyielding response to the Warsaw letter. In his speech to the committee, Dubcek said the party is resolved not to depart from the path it charted in January. He asserted that if the party reversed its course, socialism in Czechoslovakia and the "international Communist movement" would be discredited.

The next decision facing the Czechs is a response to yesterday's proposal from Moscow that there be a meeting of ranking officials on Russian soil early next week. Dubcek is not likely to send the full presidium, as Moscow suggested. He may counter the Soviets' alternative suggestion of a "broad representation" by proposing that Soviet leaders come to Czechoslovakia, possibly today or tomorrow.

The Soviet press continues its attacks on Dubcek's policies. Izvestia yesterday added its voice to warnings of the consequences to all Warsaw Pact countries of the Czech regime's failure to suppress anti-socialist elements.

Soviet troop withdrawal apparently is speeding up. Marshal Yakubovsky, the Warsaw Pact commander, left last night.

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2. Guatemala

Guatemala City may be in for a new round of terrorism:

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Several bombs were in fact set off on 18 July at several Guatemalan buildings, including the national palace and police headquarters. It is not clear, however, whether these were the work of the terrorists or of rightist elements.

In any case, the terrorists--who have operated independently of the Communist party since January--are hoping that attacks will bring further government repression of the party. They believe this could bring the more conservative party around to cooperating with them in antigovernment actions.

3. Middle East

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4. Cambodia

Sihanouk, up to his old tricks, is demanding one bulldozer as the ransom for each of the US servicemen captured with their landing craft Wednesday. He says that in any event he will keep the craft as a bonus.

5. Soviet Union

We reported earlier on preliminary preparations for an unmanned circumlunar mission. Space support ships are now nearing their stations, and we think the launch will occur in about five days.

6. Vietnam

The three American fliers, who failed to arrive in Vientiane yesterday on the Control Commission plane, apparently are to held a while longer by Hanoi.

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They are said to be expected to arrive in Vientiane on the 26 July flight of the commission's plane.

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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

- 1.) Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
- 2.) North Vietnamese Reflections of U S
Political Attitudes



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Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
for the President's Eyes Only

20 July 1968

I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

The Emerging Line on the Liberation Front: Hanoi has offered an additional incentive for US concessions in Paris by spelling out its position on a political settlement in terms designed to meet earlier US objections. In doing so, the Communists have furthered the impression that they are steadily preparing for a period of serious negotiations on the war.

The North Vietnamese Foreign Ministry memorandum issued on 17 July seems to put a formal stamp on a position toward which Hanoi has been moving for several months. The change involves dropping the earlier insistence that the internal affairs of South Vietnam must be settled "in accordance with the program" of the National Liberation Front. This is point three of Hanoi's Four Points and has been blurred on many occasions recently, although the North Vietnamese delegation used the full formulation at the Paris talks just this week.

The new memorandum, however, merely states that point three "affirms the South Vietnamese people's right to self-determination in their internal affairs," and drops the reference to the Front. This had been done before, but Hanoi underscores the significance by noting elsewhere that the Four Points remain the "basis" for a "correct political solution" and they conform to the "spirit" of the Front's political program.

For several months the Communists have been muting their former insistence that the Front is the "sole genuine representative of the South Vietnamese people." At the same time they have been developing the concept embodied in the new peace alliance of a "third force" which would serve as a bridge between Communist and non-Communist elements in South Vietnam. The memorandum suggests that Hanoi is now playing down the central role of the Front in a political settlement.

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The Front Asks for More Help: In a statement commemorating the signing of the Geneva accords on 20 July 1954, the Liberation Front called upon friends and sympathizers around the world to give even stronger support to its struggle for "national salvation."

The statement, which was dated 14 July and broadcast over Hanoi Radio's international service in English on 19 July, summarized at length the history of US "criminal aggression" in Vietnam since the signing of the Geneva agreements. It concluded by thanking foreign governments, organizations and the "progressive people of the United States" for their encouragement and appealed to them for even greater support in the future.

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II. NORTH VIETNAMESE REFLECTIONS OF US POLITICAL ATTITUDES ON THE WAR

There is nothing significant to report today.

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